

Immigration - 1930

# Harris Immigration Bill Must Pass House Muster

Favorable Action by Body  
On Measure Placing  
Mexican Quota at 1,500  
Viewed as Certain.

BY MARK SULLIVAN.

WASHINGTON, May 14.—(Special.)—The bill of Senator Harris, of Georgia, to limit Mexican immigration, that passed the senate Tuesday by a vote of 51 to 16, will be under consideration the rest of this week by the house committee on immigration. Later, almost certainly, it will go before the house for passage. In both the house committee and the house as a whole, the support of the measure is overwhelming. Hardly anyone doubts that the bill, when it comes before the house, will pass that body by an even larger proportionate majority than the one in the senate. According to common expectations, hardly more than a handful of the members of the lower house will vote against the limitation.

The present brief rest of the bill in the house committee on immigration does not mean lack of wish to facilitate the measure into final passage. It is merely to permit the state department to appear before the committee with arguments against putting this limitation on Mexican immigration. The state department takes the ground, stated roughly, that the limitation aimed at can be more courteously achieved by better enforcement of existing regulations and by negotiation with the Mexican government for limitations to be imposed co-operatively by the Mexican government and our own. The state department feels that the preservation of a spirit of friendliness with all Latin America would be impaired by adopting an arbitrary limitation, through a United States statute, on the number of persons who may enter the United States from Mexico. While the attitude of the state department is appreciated by the house committee on immigration, there is hardly a doubt that the house committee and the house itself will go ahead and complete the enactment of the statute which the senate has begun.

## On Same Basis.

The new measure puts Mexican immigration on the same quota basis as now operates with respect to European countries. The number of Mexicans permitted to come in will be based upon that portion of the total present population of the United States that is of Mexican origin. The computation is expected to admit about 1,500 to 1,900 Mexicans annually.

One effect of giving this quota to Mexico will be to subtract the same number, say 1,500, from the number

of Europeans permitted to enter. The total immigration permitted from all countries under the quota system remains the same, roughly 153,000. The effect of the present measure is merely to add Mexico to the European countries already under the quota system.

The measure applies to Mexico only. All other Latin-American countries as well as Canada remain as they have been before, without any quota limitation. Latin-American countries other than Mexico do not send immigrants to the United States in any considerable numbers, and, Senator Harris said, "there is no reason for us to limit them."

While the vote of the senate passing the bill was large, 51 to 16, the senate opposition to it was more formidable than would appear. The present action is due largely to insistent demands from organizations, chiefly labor ones, in the west and southwest that immigration of Mexican labor be limited. The demands have been made acute by the fact that a measurable quantity of native American labor is not employed. Some organizations in the west and southwest opposed the limitation. These were chiefly farmers or corporations interested in the raising of sugar beets, for which Mexican labor is largely used. The author of the bill, Senator Harris, of Georgia, spoke of the opposition coming largely from "beet sugar senators." Many other senators were reluctant to cast the votes they finally did cast in favor of the limitation.

## Same Bill Rejected.

Precisely the same bill, in effect, that was passed on Tuesday by 51 to 16 had been, on April 21, rejected by 56 to 11. In the meantime many efforts had been made to change the bill. Some of these efforts were believed by the bill's friends to be inspired by a wish to sidetrack the bill. One amendment passed at one time wiped out the entire present national origins basis for limiting immigration from all countries. Other amendments attempted to extend the limitation now applied to Mexico so as to apply to Canada and all Latin-America. The result of the complex snarl into which the senate got itself has been cynically described. It has been said that the senate completely "boxed the compass," and that every senator who wished to be on one side or both sides of all the questions involved has been able to do so. In the end, however, all the snarl has been undone, and the simple measure limiting Mexican immigration has been passed by the senate and will undoubtedly be passed by the house when brought before that body.

Senator Harris said that for five years past an average of 58,000 Mexicans came into the United States annually. Reduction of this number to roughly 1,500 will ultimately save considerable readjustment of labor in the beet sugar industry, in southwestern cotton mills and cotton fields, among track laborers of western railroads and in other industries.

## SHUT OUT MORE ALIENS.

Legislation on the subject of immigration from foreign countries deserves and should have full consideration by the present congress. That body is in its long term and no valid excuse can be put forth for a failure to deal with the issues of immigration thoroughly.

In the first place the country is threatened with an increase of unemployment of the labor already in the nation. That threat does not arise out of the wall street speculation crashes and a slowing down of production on their account. There is, in fact, little to fear from that source. It is primarily due to the rapid discharge of man-power by the more general employment of machines. That displacement is going on steadily as machines are invented to do almost automatically the work heretofore done by human brains and hands. The men who are losing their places in the mills and factories to the machines must be provided for in other avocations where the human worker is as yet indispensable.

The plainest sort of humanity and economic common sense demands that these shifting laborers shall not be subjected to increased competition by aliens pressing into this country from Europe, helping to overload the labor market and willing to work for the lowest living wages until they can get a safe foothold in our industries. No red-blooded and warm-hearted American in the congress should aid and abet such depressing and disruptive rivalry for any consideration.

Again, there has been for years and still is a trek of men, women and children from farm and other rural industries to the towns and cities. They have found farm labor unprofitable, have learned of high wages in the industrial areas, and are pressing into them in search of employment. That, also, sets up competition with the labor elements of those areas. That, too, is another strong reason for further cutting down labor immigration from foreign countries.

A third and strongly impelling reason for especially limiting the immigration of Mexican peon labor into the western states is the effect that immigration is having upon the cotton industry, particularly that in the states of the south this side of

the Mississippi river. Many thousands of those densely ignorant Mexican peons are flocking unredesired into Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and southwestern areas to labor in the cotton fields. They live on a low scale in dog-kennel fashion, and are causing the production of the big surplus of low cost cotton that depresses the entire cotton industry of the south from Virginia to Mexico. Unless the Mexican invasion is reduced drastically by our immigration laws the question will soon be facing our southeastern farmers of ceasing to grow cotton or to grow it with the certainty of its costing more than it will bring in the markets. The latter alternative spells bankruptcy.

Taking these salient facts at their full and incontestable value, it is obvious that scarcely any duty pressing upon the present session of congress is more important than a further and far-reaching reduction of the immigrant flow through our ports and over our borders.

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